

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06131 141352Z

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ACTION ORM-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9057

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, PN

SUBJ: U S CONTRIBUTION TO LATIN AMERICAN PROGRAM OF  
THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR EUROPEAN  
MIGRATION (ICEM)

REF: STATE 217677

SUMMARY. ICEM PROGRAM IN PANAMA IS SMALL AND OF LITTLE  
ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE. HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY  
VIEWS PROGRAM WITH FAVOR AND, IF BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS COULD  
BE OVERCOME, WOULD PROBABLY BE PLEASED TO SEE IT EXPAND  
BECAUSE OF SHORTAGES OF SKILLED WORKERS IN A NUMBER OF KEY  
SECTORS OF ECONOMY. END SUMMARY

1. EMOFF DISCUSSED LOCAL ICEM PROGRAM WITH PANAMA' ICEM  
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE HUMBERTO PAREDES. IMPRESSIONS  
CONCERNING THE VALUE OF PROGRAM TO PANAMA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
BASED ON FACTS PROVIDED BY MR. PAREDES.

2. ACCORDING TO PAREDES, PANAMA'S ICEM PROGRAM IS BY FAR  
THE SMALLEST IN CENTRAL AMERICA WITH AN ANNUAL AVERAGE  
OF APPROXIMATELY TEN PROFESSIONAL OR SKILLED WORKERS ARRIVING  
EACH YEAR OF WHICH PERHAPS TWO-THIRDS REMAIN IN PANAMA.

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06131 141352Z

THE ECONOMIC VALUE TO PANAMA IS THUS NOT SIGNIFICANT.

3. ICEM PROGRAM APPARENTLY FAVORABLEY VIEWED BY GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA (GOP) WHICH IS CURRENT BOTH IN ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PAYMENTS REQUIRED UPON ARRIVAL OF EACH IMMIGRANT UNDER THE PROGRAM. MOREOVER, TWELVE OF JOB OFFERS IN 1972 AND NINE IN 1973 CAME DIRECTLY FROM GOVERNMENT OFFICES, AND TWO OTHER IMMIGRANTS (MARCH 1973) CAME TO WORK FOR A PRIVATE FIRM AS TECHNICIANS IN ORDER TO SERVICE TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT IMPORTED BY GOVERNMENT. PAREDES BELIEVES THAT GOVERNMENT SUFFICIENTLY INTERESTED IN PROGRAM THAT IF LEVEL OF REQUIRED CONTRIBUTIONS WERE TO BE RAISED GOP WOULD NOT OBJECT.

4. BIGGEST PROBLEM IN PANAMA STEMS FROM BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS IN PROCESSING APPLICATIONS WHICH, ACCORDING TO PAREDES, ARE THE WORST IN CENTRAL AMERICA. AT PRESENT, A MINISTRY OF HEALTH ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN TEN NURSES THROUGH ICEM IN 1972 HAS YET TO PRODUCE A SINGLE ENTRANT IN THIS PROFESSION, NOTWITHSTANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF CANDIDATES IN EUROPE. ONE ICEM IMMIGRANT, WHO WENT TO WOR FOR THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, HAS YET TO BE PAID AFTER ONE MONTH OF EMPLOYMENT BECAUSE OF PROCESSING DELAYS WHICH CONTINUED EVEN SUBSEQUENT TO HIS ARRIVAL IN PANAMA.

5. GOP WOULD PROBABLY BE PLEASED TO SEE ICEM PROGRAM EXPAND SINCE A SHORTAGE EXISTS OF SKILLED LABOR IN MANY FIELDS INCLUDING MEDICINE, CONSTRUCTION AND FINANCE, TO NAME A FEW. THE GOP ALSO RECENTLY REQUESTED ASSISTANCE FROM ICEM IN CONNECTION WITH THE ARRIVAL OF OVER 150 POLITICAL REFUGEES FROM CHILE. ON THE OTHER HAND, PROGRAM REDUCTION OR DISCONTINUANCE WOULD NOT CREATE PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF ITS SMALL SCOPE. MOREOVER, ICEM PROGRAM OFFERS ONLY A SMALL SUPPLEMENT TO OTHER IMMIGRATION, MUCH OF WHICH COMES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA. SOME OF THE IMMIGRATION FROM LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IS OF EUROPEAN ORIGIN. PANAMA IS AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO OTHER LATIN AMERICANS BECAUSE OF ITS LACK OF EXCHANGE RESTRICTIONS, SOLID CURRENCY (PANAMA USES THE DOLLAR AS ITS ONLY PAPER CURRENCY), AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY.

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 06131 141352Z

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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